



WHY ART INTEGRATION MATTERS?

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ABSTRACT

School is an institution where students come to learn, for most of us is the beginning of our overall development as a human being begins. Students need to quench their thirst for knowledge and learning. That's one of the main goals which schools were established on, but nowadays we seem to have forgotten it. Today schools have become a place where students are assessed based on their marks in the examination; they are taught to be tested rather than shown so they can learn, which has led to an increase in stress among students aged 4 - 17. That's why the author believes that it is a high-time art-integrated education in a school that needs to be implemented. In this paper, firstly, the author will present data and statistics on how there's an increase in stress among students, and how it has negatively impacted them. In the second part of the paper, the author will focus on different aspects of traditional education, and how the implementation of art-integrated education will help students achieve better results. At the end of the second, the author will provide a brief theory supported by research on how arts-integrated education has helped students. Lastly, the author will conclude the paper by stating that we are currently facing a major issue as stress is rising among students and why where the current education system has failed the students. That is why the introduction of art-integrated education will help students develop their young minds and help them achieve the main goal the institution of school was established.

1. Introduction:

Schools are a place where students are carefully sculpted. It is a place for students to understand themselves as well as the world. It is the job of schools to develop students' emotional well-being and critical, analytical thinking power. School's job is not only to educate people in academics but to educate them on how to take up and handle the challenges that life presents to all of us. Instead, in the modern world, schools have become a stress-inducing institute for many students. It has been revealed that the stress level of students nowadays is much higher than adult¹ which in turn has led to an increase in mental health illness like anxiety and depression². It's rather common to be stressed; everyone gets stressed at different points of life. Stress is normal. Stress itself is not inherently wrong. However, when stress is chronic and/or affects daily functioning, that's when it starts to cause problems, and it can develop into an anxiety disorder. That is what happens when you are a student, as stress impacts you differently than adults because they still don't have the necessary emotional understanding or the experience to handle stress as most adults possess. It can impair their thinking process, which can impact their social life³ and academics and lead to turbulence in their personal life. As adolescence is a period of critical change, and if not carefully managed, it can lead to troubled teenagers. That is why it is of importance that when students enter school, they need to look forward to learning rather than wait for the school to end. The objective of the institution which our schools were established in is itself lost and slowly it is being forgotten. It has been found that the primary source of the students is academics, about 61% of students have revealed they are in enormous pressure to excel themselves in their studies and around 21% of students have some sort of stress to increase their grade⁴. This figure should be of grave concern to all of us rather than learning and cultivating young minds; schools unknowingly create an environment of a highly stressful situation for students. We need to understand here that even four-five-year-olds are stressed, and when they enter middle school or high school, they have already run out of steam to face other challenges and aren't unequipped to deal with stress⁵. Therefore, it is high time that schools address the problem of stress, and it should be done from the start of school life rather than later. Because stress will never bring the best out of people, it will only impact their health and reduce efficiency⁶. The schools need to focus on the beliefs and objectives they established, as schools need to be a place of learning and fun through which students develop themselves, schools need to teach us how to handle stress rather than inducing stress. Education is not just academics; education in school is about full development of a student's characteristics, personality, thinking power, emotional as well as physical well being. School is the first step of life outside our family for young people; we need to make them feel protected, loved, and cherished rather than putting them into a life full of stress. That's why it is a high time; we change how we are educating in school. In the next part, the author will explain how the integration of art into our curriculum of education will not only relieve students' stress, but it will also increase the overall development of students.

2. Importance of Art integrated Education During the 19th century, an educator named Francis M. Parker stated that for a broad public that all deep learning was "expressive" and combined "the manifestation of thought and emotion" and that is what Art integrated education is all about. When we talk about Art integrated education, we are not talking about a single subject of study like music, painting, etc. onto themselves. The integration of arts into the curriculum can encourage students and increase or unbridle their analytical, creative, and critical

thinking skills, which will become the foundation of their education. It has been proved by research that integration of art can significantly influence the learning of students in different subjects like social science, science, language, and mathematics⁸. Integration of Art has led to a stage where there is increased learning with greater understanding; students have a more exceptional ability to creative and critical thinking and are diverse learners⁹. Art integration helps with academics, but research has also proved that art-related activities that promote classroom communities have encouraged students to value kindness, caring, and fairness. Because in a city, they all work together to solve problems and have induced a spirit of togetherness in the class¹⁰. We need to understand that the integration of art as a strategy to educate students doesn't impart from the educational objectives. Instead, the combination of it helps to achieve and support educational purposes¹¹. Today students instead rely on the internet to study than their teachers to educate them. It's because nowadays, classes have become monotonous. Students will instead spend time on their phones secretly then paying attention to the teacher, and the reason for that is that students aren't engaged in the classroom. The integration of art will lead to the engagement of students in the class. It will not only excite them but also motivate them to pay attention to the quality and allow them to shine in the classrooms. The use of art integration provides teachers and students with opportunities to create, respond, connect, and participate¹². If there's an engagement of students in the classroom, which will lead a student to become comfortable in a school environment, thus whenever the students may have any doubts or stress, there's a chance that they will be more open about it to their respective teachers. Let's face it. Schools today have become only about tests and your grades. Today school's policy is more focused on STEM education (science, technology, engineering, and math) that has been termed as a "factory model of education"¹³. Mostly that has led to students to prepare just for the test that they have to appear, and that's where the stress of exams comes from. Due to that majority of the students don't look forward to going to school nowadays. Schools are supposed a place of learning, but rather it has become more about the assessment of your test answers. That's where art integration can help. It can be an essential tool in revealing the hidden capabilities of students. Many students who are termed as "low" can, in reality, be far ahead but aren't able to express themselves due to hindrance in using technology or language proficiency or any other traditional methods. Here art integration can help them to make themselves understandable to all of us. Imagine, a student who is asked to describe the understanding of the cell is having a hard time as they aren't able to find the specific words/terms. When allowed to visualize the process, they can draw the picture of the cell with its details while explaining it in their simple language. Artworks made by students show their understanding of their knowledge and thus can act as a platform on which the teachers can assess student's learning. With art integration, the traditional method of pen-paper assessment can be revolutionized as the regular assessment has only led to an increase in stress among students. One of the most prominent¹⁴ research on how the integration of art into education impacts the learning process found the following:-

- a) **It reaches students who were rather hard to reach.** Art has provided at-risk students a reason for them to stay engaged with the schools. Sometimes, it is the sole reason for them to remain engaged as art provides them with a rare opportunity and ability to express themselves to others.

- b) **It reaches students in different ways than before.** Students who were termed "failure" or were "acting out" as the traditional classroom education method were not suitable or were less engaging for them became high-achievers in the art learning setting. Their success in art became a bridge for them to achieve success in other aspects of learning.
 - c) **It provides a platform for adults to learn in the lives of young people.** Learning is a life-long process. Many of the adults as they age forget that, but integrated art education reminds them of that. As they see the young people around representing the same ideas in different forms of visual representation, they learn it also shows the student that learning in any-field is a life learning process.
 - d) **There is a transformation of the learning environment in class.** When the focus is on art during learning, schools and other environments become a place of discovery. Art breaks down the wall between classrooms and discipline, rather than writing every answer and notes everything turns into a representative model.
 - e) **It connects students with themselves and with students around them.** To make something or to create something is a personal experience. The student relies upon themselves to produce results, and that way, they are engaged with something far more profound than just "writing an answer."
 - f) **It gives students who are considered successful in a new challenge.** Boredom or self-satisfaction is a hurdle towards success. For students who have proven to be far superior and have outgrown the present learning environment, art offers them boundless opportunities and challenges, thus keeping them on our toes.
 - g) **The working of the real world is understandable and is related to their learning experience.** Art expands the creative thinking that, in turn, helps us in our workplaces. Ideas are what matters; our ability to spawn ideas, bring our ideas alive, and effectively communicate them to our co-workers is what matters in the workplace.
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3. Conclusion:

In this paper, we first saw that the current education system has negatively impacted students' mental health and has led to an increase in chronic stress among students. Different statistics and data supported the argument that school today has created a stressful environment. We have lost the true purpose for which schools were established rather today; it has just become about grade examination. The author then highly related that how stress has negatively affected instead, it's well being and in many cases lead to deterioration of their mental health, and that's why the author thinks that it is high time we change on how we impart education in schools as the statistics and research shows that our traditional method of education isn't working the way they should be. In the second part of the paper, the author showed the importance of art integrated education. The author presented research that highlighted that integrating art into education has cultivated innovation, creative thinking, and risk-taking in the students. With that, it fosters their thinking ability. Then the author presented that integration of art will lead to engagement of the students which leads to increased team activity and sense of community among students, after that the author stated why there's a need to change the current assessment method and how the integration of art can help students break traditional barriers. In the end, the author pointed to various points where integration can positively impact students' learning process. Thus, the author showed the problem with the schools' current environment and why there is a need for integrated art education.

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